

June 5, 1974

Dr. David Pager
Information Sciences Program
University of Hawaii
Honolulu HI 96822

Dear Dr. Pager,

I was quite intrigued to see your papers on the problem of communicating complex information in the communications of the ACM. (But I was a little surprised not to find your name listed in the last edition of the ARPA-Net Directory, believing that your program must be affiliated with the ALOHA node of the network, the latter corresponding to many of the functions that you were anticipating.

At any rate, I did want to open some communication with you, and this mail address will do just fine; or alternatively Lederberg@ISI (since we evidently do have a number of interests in common). I am enclosing an experiment in paper writing of some years ago which was not entirely felicitous but which reflects some of the same linguistic concerns expressed in your note.

Far more important is what we are trying to do with the SUMEX community, and I think you may be interested in a preliminary (and unauthorized!) draft of our mission statement. We are still trying to get through a policy decision that would enable us to use the ARPA-net, but failing that we will have communication ^{links} ~~links~~ through a commercial ~~TIME~~ET interconnection and if ARPA-net does not work out for us, we will eventually go to one of the commercial packet switching systems. Professor Gershik at your medical school will be a collaborator with us this summer and may be able to convey back to you some more of the operational flavor of what we are seeking. If you have contacts with other people in biomedical research that might correspond to membership in the community, we are addressing, I would be grateful for your suggestions.

If you know of other literature on the communication problems you have been writing about or could share with me the comment you may have received on these papers, I would indeed be most interested.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

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P.S. I wonder if you know of another experiment in the development of formal language for scientific statement that is embodied in the book by Hans Freudenthal "Lincos" which was purportedly a design of a language for cosmic intercourse, published 1960, North Holland. Kyburg's "Philosophy of Science - a formal approach", Macmillan 1968, is the most ambitious recent attempt that I know about; Pat Suppes has been contributing to this area, too. Unfortunately, these efforts seem to be a bust as far as practical application in experimental science is concerned but I may attribute this more to our own witlessness than to the inherent impossibility. If you have your own bibliography on this general subject, I would be grateful to be able to share it with you.